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ABSTRACT

The learning module facilitates public cognizance of learning goals and objectives, specified competencies, learning activities, assessment modes, and criteria levels. These modules enable pre- and inservice teachers to achieve specified competencies in teaching reading and language arts. The rationale for the use of the learning module as the major vehicle for the instructional delivery system in a competency-based program for training teachers in the areas of reading and language arts is presented in this document. The functions, development, and structure of the modules and their components, and the resultant instructional package are examined and reported. Also contained are such features as the rationale for the objectives of the module, operational instructions, alternate learning activities, recycling procedures, evaluation checklists, activity schedules, reference lists, brief practice exercises, and pertinent forms. (Author/TO)

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Instructional Packaging: The Efficacy and Utility of the Learning Module as a Major Vehicle in Competency Based Teacher Education Programs in Reading and Language Arts at the University of North Florida

Symposium 19--Practical (Practically) Competency Based Teacher Education: Reading and Language Arts
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CHANGE AND COMPETENCY

With conclusive proof and evidence bombarding the comtemporary citizen and educator, one cannot validly ignore or resist the changes which have occurred and are occurring in mammoth proportions. At the University of North Florida, the managers, implementors, and facilitators of learning for those who are pursuing a program in teacher education- - both in-service and pre-service--realize and are committed to the fact that education must respond to the develcpments within the society, and, consequently, the educational arena. To the enlightened and informed educator, technological and societal changes are self-evident and allow one to ascertain the implications and relevance to educational pursuits. Coupled with current educational developments, these societal and technological changes appear to be the major vehicles by which institutions devoted to facilitating learning can perform their functions on a level paramount to any other one known or experienced prior to current times. (1)

It is surely a rarity to find one today who does not hold that the curricula and schools must change and, of course, change in a positive way which will yield a

product competent in those areas which will enable him to function at an optimum level in each of the various rolls he must assume. Since both society and the times demand this type of individual, the problem at UNF--as it is with all institutions of higher learning- - is how to produce the type of teacher who can perform the tasks requisite for developing the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed by the product of the system--the child or adolescent in school. (6)

DESIGN AND VEHICLES FOR COMPETENCY IN TEACHING

Because of the inherent and ancillary features of the systemic approach to instructional design and management, the College of Education at UNF is using such a model to provide a teacher education program which is actually a system consisting of parts or components acting and interacting to achieve a predetermined goal. The model used at UNF is designed to bring about specific measurable outcomes, provide data as to the effectiveness with which these outcomes are achieved, and be continuously adaptive and responsive to input and new evidence concerning its functioning. Moreover, the systemic model proceeds in a systematic manner; builds in the feature of relevance; deals with measurable behaviors; and it specifies the relationship between learnings to be achieved. In the systemic approach "the results of actions are evaluated and used to modify objectives or procedures, or both." (3)

A competency-based teacher education program should--from every indication of the literature and current practice-contain the essential features of a systemic approach along with other pertinent factors. The system operating at UNF requires that: (1) learning goals and objectives be established; (2) an analysis of the goals and objectives be executed to determine what is required to carry them out, (3) an instructional system be designed to carry out the goals and objectives, and (4) methods and modes of implementation and evaluation of the instructional system also be designed. The system at UNF also includes an elaborate feedback mechanism which has been found to be necessary for providing data on the performance and effect of the system as advocated recently by Margaret Lindsey.(4) Field experiences (observation and participation in the public school setting), self-instruction, independent study, and learning modules are components of the system which illuminate, enhance, and appear to be requisite for the implementation of the systemic approach as it relates to competency-based teacher education at University of North Florida.

Competency Based Teacher Education and Reading/Language Arts

. The Reading and Language Arts programs at UNF-like all other programs and/or courses which lead to certification

and degrees in the various areas of education--utilize the learning packet or module as the instructional package. The learning module used at UNF is built upon the same principles as the systemic approach previously discussed in this paper and others in the series. The learning modules used at UNF and the systemic approach have the following developmental features in common; (1) Formulation of a philosophical base, rationale, and basic assumptions; (2) Identification of specific goals, objectives, or competencies; (3) Establishment of the proper sequence for objectives; (4) Identification of modes or methods of implementation; (5) Performance of activities and tasks gleaned from objectives; (6) Evaluation of outcomes and the system or module. Moreover, the learning module is similar to a system in that it deals with specific measurable outcomes and behaviors; provides data relative to the effectives with which outcomes are achieved; and yields data through inherent feedback channels which aid in the modification, acceptance, or rejection of objectives, procedures, and materials.

The learning Module, which actually constitutes the instructional package, can be defined as a written guide which is designed to direct individual and group learning behavior. It is a plan for learning which enables one to study and realize or achieve specified competencies

in particular subjects or topics. At UNF the learning module is not viewed as programmed instruction guides, workbooks, textbooks, or correspondence courses. The modules are a means of organizing units of content for instruction in such a manner that it is assured that the student has acquired the content of that module or that he will do so by carrying out the instructions contained in it.*

The core of the module is a series of learning tasks prepared by the College of Education faculty at UNF. The basic idea of the learning modules used in Reading and Language Arts is that the instruction should be related to the appropriate performance objectives and that the module is the vehicle or tool for organizing and implementing learning activities.

MODULE FORMAT AND COMPONENTS

Although the format and content of each module for any given cluster of reading and/or language teaching competencies differ, there is a basic structure or motif which prevails throughout all the learning modules used. The basic components of the module are as follows: (1) Classification Page; (2) Prospectus: Introduction, Rationale, Basic Assumptions; (3) Module Outline: (4)

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*Based on personal correspondence between Dr. Richard J. McArdle, Chairman, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, and the writer, June 1, 1972 to July 15, 1972.

Prerequisites; (5) Procedure or Operational Instructions; (6) Specific Objectives or Competencies; (7) Pre-assessment; (8) Enabling Activities/Alternate Activities; (9) Post Assessment; and (10) Recycling Procedures, (2), (5).

The Classification Page

The classification page is the first page and cover page of the instructional package or learning module. It includes such information as follows: (1) Course Name, Symbol, and Number; (2) Department or Learning Area, (3) Coding (an assigned number to be used for purposes of classification, storage, retrieval, and publication) (4) Name of Module (specific content); (5) Broad Pre-Requisites; (6) Specific Learner Group and Professional Use. Also included on this heading page are the date of publication or printing and student information which includes the student's name, address, phone number, and student number.

Because of the varied usage, purposes, and coding needs of any given cluster of objectives in Reading and Language Arts, this classification page should and does vary accordingly. (5)

The Prospectus:

The prospectus generally follows the title page. It is used to inform the student of the particular content covered in the module and the several parameters involved.

Further, it provides the student with a general perspective of the area covered in the module.(5) The prospectus also includes a clear statement of the rationale for the module's objectives and outlines the major assumptions upon which the module is based.(2,3) In essence, the prospectus gives an introduction to the module by stating the concise purpose and functions of the content to be covered and gives students a basis for deciding whether or not this particular learning experience appears to be suitable for his present or future needs.

Module Outline

The module outline provides the user of the module with a ready reference which enables him to quickly locate the various components of the entire module. It gives the reader a capsule view of the arrangement and systematic development of the learning module. When page numbers follow the components, the student can utilize the module outline as he would a table of contents.

Pre-Requisites

This component informs the student of the essential subject matter, thought processes, skills, and attitudes he must possess in order to undertake the learning experiences provided by the particular module. Furthermore, the reading and language arts' modules often adhere to

MacAs[illegible]n's (5) explanation of pre-requisites:

> ...Pre-requisites refer to other modules or courses which must have been successfully completed prior to the selection of particular modules. These modules are considered essential to the successful achievement of the competencies offered by the new module. The pre-requisites, if any will be listed by their competency module identification symbol, number, and name. In some instances graduate status or permission of a department chairman may serve as the best pre-requisite.

Procedure (Operational Instructions)

The procedural component of the module provides one with a clear-cut method for accomplishing the objectives of the learning module. Quite often, this component consists of a "set of specific instructions outlining the steps necessary to complete all phases of the module" (5). These instructions stipulate and clarify times, places, materials, and resources, tasks, avenues, and approaches.

Objectives

Each objective is stated--for the most part--in behavioral or performance terms. These objectives are marked by clarity and the absence of ambiquity. They

stipulate what the learner is to demonstrate; the conditions --facilitating or limiting--under which he is to perform; and, most often, the criteria by which he is to be evaluated. These objectives serve as an impetus for the subsequent implementation and evaluation.

Pre-Assessment

This component is designed to determine the student's initial status in relationship to the content to be learned. This is done through a number of modes of assessment which may include oral examinations, video-taped demonstrations, written objective and essay examinations, and conferences or consultation with instructors. In most instances this component directs students to the proper facility for pretesting or other pre-assessment modes to determine whether or not he already has some of the competencies required in the module. If he does possess some or all of the requisite competencies, he may bypass those and go on to others which he needs to master. The pre-assessment itself is not printed in the learning module.

Enabling Activities

The enabling activities designate "choices students may make to acquire the knowledge, skill, or performance-task competency identified in the specific performance

objectives."(5) These activities include: (1) reading and studying references; (2) attending demonstrations, lectures, and seminars; (3) developing lesson plans, modules, and units of study; (4) selecting appropriate content for given pupils; (5) surveying, critiquing, and analyzing resources and materials; (6) demonstrating teaching strategies; (7) devising measurement devices and instruments; (8) selecting, administering, and scoring standardized assessment devices; (9) evaluating learning and instruction; (10) developing worksheets, study guides and other aids for facilitating learning; (11) managing actual learning experiences in public schools; (12) observing public school settings; (13) designing free choice, independent or individual learning activities; (14) reviewing journal articles; (15) preparing reaction cards; (16) listening and responding to appropriate audio tapes; (17) teaching lessons to peers (18) determining evaluative criteria for materials, resources and performance; and (19) attending debriefing conferences with college professors and public school teachers.

The enabling activities previously mentioned lend themselves well to the several modes of instruction and learning such as large group participation, seminars, discussions, conferences, media presentations, practical experiences, and independent study. The enabling activities also allow for more than one prescribed route in achieving the specified objectives and facilitate

the time variable through individualization. Personalization and the humanistic element are not overlooked or precluded because individuals are given numerous goals and objectives to pursue and there is sufficient time alloted for student-instructor interaction which facilitates feedback, input, and evaluation.

Post-Assessment

The post-assessment is not usually contained in the learner's edition of the module. Usually, a special note is included which advises the learner of the time, place, and criteria for the post-assessment. It is a type of diagnostic evaluation based on the content of the module. Further, the post-assessment contains appropriate devices (written tests, oral exams, performance tasks, etc.) designed to determine the student's status in relationship to the content after he has completed assigned learning activities. Moreover it determines the degree to which the specified competencies have been met and the student's exit from the module.

Recycling Procedure

When a student fails to demonstrate specified competencies, the instructor decides whether or not the student should recycle the activity or activities. This component of the modules stipulates the conditions under which an activity or objective must be repeated. Information is

given regarding the length of time for the recycle, the exact nature of it, and the required level of mastery, and the highest possible grade. In general, recycling requires a re-encountering with the module objective(s). Often, both student and instructor plan the new experience.

Other Components of the Learning Module

The nature and scope of the objectives often dictate those components which will aid the students in proceeding smoothly through the module from entry to exit. Components which are sometimes considered additive as follows: (1) Schedules of class meetings; (2) Evaluation checklist with criteria; (3) Reference lists; (4) Peer teaching debriefing forms; (5) Worksheets; (6) Practice exercises; (7) Glossaries; (8) Lesson plan formats; and (9) Lists of materials and resources.

A Final Word

The modules used at UNF as the vehicle for realizing and achieving objectives and competencies in Reading and Language Arts instruction are continually being revised and modified. This is, of course, necessary if the program is to adhere to the cause of positive change for improvement in teacher education. This refinement and redevelopment of the learning modules or instructional packages is not done without form, fashion, and reason. It is a result of input from the feedback channels--those

inherent in the systemic approach, those contrived for the learning modules, and those that one could not possibly have imagined to surface during the initial developmental stages of the learning modules.

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